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ABSTRACT

The results of nine studies evaluating the effectiveness of volunteer programs in the schools were reviewed in an attempt to answer three questions: What is the value of volunteers to schools? Why do people volunteer to work in classrooms? What is the effect of volunteering on the volunteer? The studies involved were originally intended to evaluate programs in California operated by a university and a major corporation in the late 1970s, and were not designed to answer the broader theoretical questions posed during the review. Generally, the review indicated that both volunteers and their supervising teachers felt that the volunteers were effective and desirable. Volunteers from both the university and the corporate setting were found to be similarly motivated by the opportunity to work with children, to develop skills, and to participate in the program. Finally, changes in the attitudes of volunteers as a result of participation were found to be significant and positive, but not dramatic. The review points up the need for research specifically addressing the motivations for and benefits of volunteer activities. (Author/PGD)

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VOLUNTEERS IN EDUCATION

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Volunteers in Education

R. Cone and J. Johnson

INTRODUCTION

During the past decade nearly every item of state (California) and federal legislation regarding public education has had a "public involvement" requirement. The public is expected to both advise and assist in classrooms. Several studies have examined the political and educational ramifications of advisory committees but few have examined the many and varied aspects of in-class volunteering. The few studies that are available focus on the effect of adult volunteers on specific skill development of the students being impacted by the volunteers. For example, Heller (1977) found that learning disabled students receiving assistance from graduate student volunteers had increased skill at word recognition and comprehension. Additional studies of this nature are called for before some overall assesment of volunteer effectiveness can be made. To better understand the context in which volunteers function, studies are needed which exam the perceptions teachers and students hold regarding volunteer assistance.

In addition to these studies of the impact of volunteers in classrooms, there are a number of questions yet to be answered regarding the reasons for volunteering or the benefits of volunteering. Few studies have looked at these issues and those that do exist are primarily anecdotal, documenting the effects of volunteering on particular individuals (e.g. Slack, 1978; Finacom, 1977).

The data in this paper have been gathered in nine studies conducted by two volunteer programs during a five year period. The volunteer programs, the Joint Educational Project (JEP) at the University of Southern California and the Atlantic Richfield Joint Educational Project (ARCO JEP), annually place 1000 to 1200 volunteers in ten community schools to tutor, assist teachers, teach mini-courses, and otherwise work with teachers, staff members, and students. The studies have arisen out of a genuine concern for the maintenance and improvement of the programs particularly in relation to three critical questions:

- What effect, if any, do volunteers have on classrooms?
- What motivates people to volunteer? and
- What are the actual benefits accrued to volunteers?

In that the studies described below were intended for program evaluation, they do not purport to be definitive statements on volunteerism.

We offer our studies and results with the hope that they might initiate additional inquiry in the area and that findings from such studies will assist us in making more effective use of volunteers.

SUMMARIES OF NINE STUDIES

Study 1. In the fall of 1975 and 1976, univeristy student volunteers taught 20 fifth graders to be "tooth tutors" of 150 second grade students. A measure of plaque indices was made on all fifth and second-graders prior to and following the instructional period. Students not receiving any special program of instruction in dental hygiene served as the control group. Data were analyzed using both analyses of variance and covariance.

Study 2. Each semester university volunteers who work one to two hours per week for eleven weeks are evaluated by their supervising teachers. During 1979-1980 944 volunteers were evaluated in terms of overall effectiveness in tutoring, teaching, or otherwise assisting in the classroom using a five point rating scale.

Study 3. One hundred and fifty-seven students in a political science course were given an option to volunteer in schools or to complete a term paper. The students (86) who participated in the volunteer program worked in classrooms one to two hours each week during the semester. Prior to beginning their volunteer work, these students along with the non-volunteer students, completed a 48-item questionnaire which collected demographic data and surveyed the extent of agreement or disagreement with 34 statements about the University's inner-city community, critical social issues, and the protestant work ethic. Students completed the questionnaire again at the conclusion of the semester. Factor rotation and analyses of variance were used to determine relationships and statistical differences.

Study 4. One hundred and thirty-seven second and third semester Spanish language students involved in community volunteer work were asked to evaluate their motives for volunteering, their use of Spanish in community, and the benefits of volunteering. Results were analyzed using analyses of variance to determine if certain demographic characteristics (e.g. reasons for volunteering, Spanish-speaking ability, type of assignment) were associated with successful volunteer experiences.

Study 5. This study determines the impact a university volunteer program had on Spanish language skills. Second and third semester Spanish students were given the option of work in schools with bilingual children. Random samples of 41 volunteers and 47 non-volunteers rated themselves on a set of background/demographic variables to determine initial differences and to allow a more powerful comparison on a set of 10 Spanish language criteria, which consisted on faculty rating of speaking ability, student self-ratings and objective test scores.

Study 6. Thirty students enrolled in a health care communication course volunteered to teach basic health concepts in the community. At the conclusion of the course each student rated the extent of their agreement-disagreement with statements about the reason they volunteered, the value of the experience, their knowledge, skill prior to volunteering, and their knowledge and skill after volunteering. Analysis of covariance was used to examine reported differences in knowledge and skill prior to and following volunteer work. Correlations between knowledge and skill acquisition and certain demographic variables were also examined.

Study 7. In 1979, questionnaires were distributed to 92 corporate volunteers who had just completed a semester of volunteer instruction an hour each week at one urban school. In addition to evaluating components of the school volunteer program, corporate volunteers were asked to describe why they joined the volunteer program, how the experience affected them, how volunteering had affected their productivity at work, and how their attitudes toward teachers and schools had changed. Open-ended responses were categorized and frequencies were tabulated.

Study 8. In 1979, questionnaires were distributed to 32 teachers who hosted corporate volunteers in their classrooms. Using a four-point rating scale, data were collected on teachers' estimates of the extent to which volunteers contributed to student learning, volunteers increased student interests in school, and students enjoyed working with volunteers. Number and percentage of responses were tabulated.

Study 9. In 1980, questionnaires were distributed to 94 corporate volunteers who had just completed a semester of volunteer instruction at two urban schools. Again, open-ended responses were categorized and frequencies tabulated.

RESULTS

Results of the nine studies are presented here in response to the three research questions posed in the introduction.

Effectiveness: What is the Value of Volunteers? Studies verifying the contributions of volunteers have drawn primarily on anecdotal reports and surveys of teachers. In a survey which asked teachers to evaluate the effectiveness of volunteers (Study 2), teachers gave students a mean rating of 1.34 on a five point scale with "1" being an "excellent" rating. Six hundred seventy-two students out of a total of 944 (71%) were given the highest rating. Nearly all of the remaining 272 students were given ratings of "2" or "3". Less than one percent of the entire group was rated below the "satisfactory" rating.

Twenty-seven of 32 teachers responded to another survey (Study 8) on the value of corporate volunteers. On a four point scale with "1" being excellent teachers gave volunteers a mean rating of 1.47 for "helped students learn" and 1.67 for "helped students be more interested in school". One hundred percent of the teachers indicated that students enjoyed the tutorial experience and 96% of the teachers wanted to request another volunteer.

While there have been no attempts to objectively measure the effectiveness of all USC JEP volunteers on a broad scale, the effects of volunteers working in specific projects have been determined. In the fall of 1975 and 1976 University volunteers working in a plaque control program trained fifth graders to tutor second graders in dental health (Study 1). The effectiveness of the volunteer program was measured with a pre-post test taking plaque indices from six teeth in each participants mouth. Results are in Table 1. Analyses of variance within both treatment groups (pre to post) and between both treatment groups and the control group were significant to the .001 level.

Incentives: What Motivates the Volunteer? Three separate studies have collected data on the reasons for student participation in a university volunteer program. In each of these studies students were asked to respond to a list of eight possible incentives: Interest in project, ease of completing project (in comparison to other options), desire to help others, desire to learn about community, interest in working with kids, course credit, competency development, and unknown. In two studies, a study of students from a health care communication course (Study 6) and a study of 137 students in Spanish classes (Study 4), students were asked to check all the incentives that seemed to be relevant. This procedure made analysis of the data difficult as respondents indicated multiple (as many as 6) reasons for participating. Despite the difficulty of interpreting the results, in each study the same four categories appeared to be the most popular. In both studies "interest" was the second most frequently checked motive. Course credit (ranking 1st and 3rd), working with kids (4th and 1st), and competency development (3rd and 4th) were the other motives which drew large numbers of responses. Of the 69 responses to the survey of health students, 51 were for the four motives indicated (74%). Of the 402 responses to the survey of Spanish students, 295 were for the same four motives (73%).

In the third study (Study 5), 41 students were asked to rate each of the motives individually on a five-point scale (very little importance to very high importance). Again the same four motives topped the list (see Table 2).

In two studies (studies 7 and 9) 186 employees were asked in an evaluation survey why they had joined the company's school volunteer program. Open-ended responses were sorted into six categories of motives for volunteering. These were:

1) Want to help others;

TABLE 1

Pre and Post Plaque Indices for Control Students, Fith grade Tutors and Second grade Tutees in 1975 and 1976 Studies

	1975			1976		
	Pre	Post	%Change	Pre	Post	%Change
$Control_{n=208}$	3.23	2.85	12%	3.37	3.38	0%
$Tutors_{n=81}$	3.35	1.37	59%	3.33	2.30	30%
$Tutees_{n=178}$	3.58	2.37	33%	3.47	1.39	60%

TABLE 2

Mean Rating by University Students (n=41) of Incentives for Volunteering in Schools

INCENTIVE*	$\overline{X}$ +
Working with children	3.54
Competency Development "Improve Spanish"	3.51
Course Credit	2.92
Interest	2.92

*The remaining four incentives or motives had means from 2.47 to 1.73.

+Based on a 5 point scale with 5 indicating agreement with a statement as an accurate representation of personal motive for volunteering.

2) Likes to work with children;

3) Thinks it would be interesting, rewarding, challenging;

4) Wants to practice a skill or gain in knowledge;

5) Wants to assist in a worthwhile civic activity; and

6) other.

When multiple responses were given, they were coded in each category.

Results presented in Table 3 show that "being helpful", "working with children", and "being interested" were most often described by employees as motives for volunteering

Benefits: What are the Effects of the Classroom Experience on the Volunteer? To determine the effect of volunteering with Spanish-speaking children in the community on the Spanish-speaking skills of university students, eighty-eight students participated in a study (Study 5) involving faculty ratings of oral language samples. While there was no significant difference between the over all ratings of the 41 students who had worked in the community and the 47 students who had attended a traditional language lab, there were differences in specific criteria. Multivariate differences calculated between volunteers and non-volunteers determined that while non-volunteers were superior to volunteers in sytactic construction and final exam grade (corrected Beta weights of .28 and .16), volunteers were superior in sound production and speaking ease/comfort (corrected Beta weights of .23 and .23).

The effect of volunteer experience on speech communication skills has been measured in a study (Study 6) which compared responses to self-ratings of speech skills of communication students (n=13) teaching health mini-courses" as volunteers with self-ratings of communication students (n=53) who were not volunteers. Analysis of covariance, using start-of-semester ratings as covariates, was used to compare end-of-semester ratings of the two groups. Volunteers had significantly higher ratings ($p < .01$) for 25% of the 16 items, most notably for items such as understanding the role of non-verbal factors and understanding communication within groups. The remaining comparisons demonstrated no significant differences between groups.

In addition to skill development, it has been suggested that the act of volunteering may alter student attitudes. To test this hypothesis 86 volunteers and 71 non-volunteers in an introductory political science class completed a questionnaire both at the beginning and end of the semester. Students rated the extent of their agreement/disagreement with each of 34 statements about the inner-city community, social issues, and the protestant work ethic.

TABLE 3

Frequency of Responses by Employees to Evaluation Survey item asking Why they Volunteered.

	1978-79 STUDY N=48	1979-80 STUDY N=37	TOTAL N=85
To help others	20	19	39
To work with children	17	10	27
It's interesting, challenging, or rewarding	13	8	21
To practice skills or increased knowledge	7	5	11
To assist with a worthwhile civic activity	8	4	12
Other	4	1	5

N= # of surveys returned.

Pre-treatment results were analyzed to determine group equivalence and all data was analyzed by factor rotation to determine the extent to which items in a set measured a factor. Analysis of variance was utilized to examine main effects and interactions.

Students participating in the volunteer component did alter a number of their views of the community. They appeared to be less alienated from the community and more willing to see it as a environment which had something to offer to university students. Five of the 34 statements had significantly ($p < .05$) higher rates of agreement/disagreement for volunteers than for non-volunteers. For example, statements included: "The community around USC should be avoided" (volunteers disagree), and "There is much to learn in the community" (volunteers agree).

An additional four items demonstrated a weak ($p < .15$) interaction between class attendance and volunteer involvement with volunteers becoming more positive toward the community during the course of the semester.

Two studies of corporate volunteers (Studies 7 and 9) indicated changes in attitudes of employees as a result of the volunteer experience. When asked how volunteering affected productivity on the job, 10% of 1978-79 respondents (Study 7) and 25% of 1979-80 respondents (Study 9) said their productivity increased slightly or significantly (See Table 4). Many indicated that teaching was a break from the routine of work and invigorating.

"Rewarding" and "frustrating" are the descriptions most given of how JEP personally affected volunteers (Study 7). Many respondents felt they learned about the community, helped their students progress, or personally improved in their ability to communicate or speak Spanish. Others found the use of Spanish by the students was a barrier or that teachers did not plan how to best use their help. These volunteers were very involved in JEP (as suggested by their time commitments); consequently, rewards were great and frustrations were intolerable.

When asked if their attitudes toward teachers and schools had changed, 56% (27) said "Yes". Most (23) had a greater respect for teachers and a better understanding of the problems of urban schools. A few (4) felt more negative about teachers and schools; generally, these feelings were associated with a frustrating JEP experience.

When employees in the 1980 study (Study 9) were asked if their attitudes toward teachers and schools had changed, 57% said "Yes". Forty-seven percent indicated that their attitudes had changed in a positive direction and comments show that many volunteers have greater respect for teachers and their job. Those who did not change in attitude (43%) already had very positive attitudes toward the schools. Those volunteers whose attitudes changed negatively appeared from their written comments to be discouraged by the problems school face.

TABLE 4

Number and Percent of Responses by Employees to the Question "How has JEP (volunteer work) Affected Your Productivity at Work?"

	1978-79 STUDY		1979-80 STUDY	
	n	%	n	%
Increased it significantly	0	--	2	6%
Increased it slightly	5	10%	7	19%
No effect	35	73%	27	72%
Decreased it slightly	8	8%	1	3%
Decreased it significantly	0	--	0	--

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

What is the Value of Volunteers to Schools? - Each of the studies conducted demonstrated a high degree of effectiveness or perceived effectiveness on the part of volunteers. They demonstrated this effectiveness in tutoring students to reduce the level of plaque in their mouths. The effectiveness of both university and corporate volunteers has been verified in multiple evaluations in which teachers have consistently rated the volunteers as highly effective and helpful in the classroom. These findings are in agreement with the findings reported by Heller (1977) yet far more research and evaluation of existing programs needs to be conducted to ascertain whether the effectiveness may be due to low expectations combined with a high degree of gratitude. Our study of volunteers in our dental program would discount this hypothesis yet the overall ratings of volunteers is so high as to make even the proponents of volunteerism somewhat skeptical.

Why Do People Volunteer to Work in Classrooms? - Despite the differences in age, position, and responsibilities between student volunteers and corporate volunteers, we found remarkable similarities between their motives for volunteering. Working with children, interest in program, and skill development were each rated highly by volunteers. Altruism appears to be a prime motivational force among corporate volunteers but of much less importance to university volunteers. Course credit for volunteer experience was important for university volunteers but no equivalent "pay-off" existed for corporate volunteers. Further research into this area might attempt to better isolate and define the categories utilized in our studies. It is our belief that everyone gets something out of volunteering and better understanding how and why these forces work will enable educators to better recruit and utilize classroom volunteers.

What is the Effect of Volunteering on the Volunteer? - Literature promoting volunteer programs describe in glowing terms the learning and attitudinal transformations which volunteers experience as a result of their classroom experiences. A desire to document both the extent of the learning and the existence of transformations prompted us to research the effect of the volunteering experience on the volunteer. Our studies, while finding significant changes in volunteers' skills and attitudes, found that the changes were less dramatic than those often described. We found that students who practiced speaking skills in the community were more comfortable and more in tune with everyday communication (sound production, group communication). Our hypothesis that students who volunteered in Spanish-speaking classrooms would have significantly better speaking skills was not substantiated. On the other hand, students with volunteer work did equally as well on an oral exam as non-volunteers who attended a traditional lab for their language practice. We hypothesize that if volunteers spent more than the 12 hours per semester currently in practice there would be a significant difference in speaking ability as ease of speaking is a critical commodity in language acquisition.

Changes in attitudes also were not so much dramatic as relatively minor and in areas directly related to the volunteer experience. Attitudes toward the community were altered for both the university and the corporate volunteers. There is some evidence that students involved in community volunteer work may have used their own experience to critically examine ideas in the classroom. The evidence is weak but the hypothesis is worth exploring more fully. Many corporate volunteers reported a significant increase in their own productivity as a result of participation in an invigorating volunteer program.

Our less than sensational findings in the area of changes in volunteers in no way alters our belief in the impact of volunteering on volunteers. The anecdotal information both in the literature and in our own experiences is too overwhelming to be ignored. Rather we belief that our initial efforts to document the effects of volunteering have been very primitive and that our instruments and procedures must be more sophisticated if we are to tap them more accurately. We know from our studies of peoples' motives for volunteering that there are multiple motives for volunteering in almost each volunteer. If a volunteer expects to get several different things from the experience and each volunteer has slightly different motives than other volunteers, then we can expect that each volunteer would get something different from the experience. The complexity of the phenomenom of attitude change in uncontrolled setting such as classroom volunteering is extremely difficult to capture but we believe is worth the efforts.

The motivations and effects of volunteers in schools have been neglected as issues for educational research. In part, this may be because collecting objective data on the volunteer experience is difficult. Schools have little control over the volunteer and it is almost impossible to separate the effects of schooling in general from the effects of instruction by volunteers. Nonetheless, by examining a compilation of data on volunteer instruction and the effects of their presence in schools, patterns and trends can be identified. When we understand what motivates volunteers to work in schools, we can better design programs which fully utilize their energy and talents. When we understand the effects of volunteers on classrooms, educators will be more able to design effective volunteer programs which maximize the assets of increasing "public involvement" in schools. When we understand what changes occur in the volunteer as a result of their school work, educators can direct their energies to facilitating positive changes.

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